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WAR TERMINATION:
The Application of Operational Art to Negotiating Peace

by

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A paper submitted to the faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations

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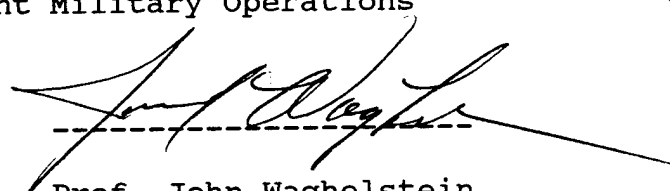
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We see, therefore, that war is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means. What remains peculiar to war is simply the peculiar nature of its means. War in general, and the commander in any specific instance, is entitled to require that the trend and designs of policy shall not be inconsistent with these means. That, of course, is no small demand; but however much it may affect political aims in a given case, it will never do more than modify them. The political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose.¹

--- von Clausewitz

American military doctrine states that "conflict termination should be considered from the outset of planning."² Paradoxically, that same doctrine is one of overwhelming force and decisive battle that, even when resulting in military dominance at the end of hostilities, may be inadequate to achieve the desired end state.³ Trends in modern warfare make it imperative for operational design to be adaptive, i.e., able to shift focus from objectives intended to secure military success to those intended to promote favorable negotiated war termination. The 1950-1953 Korean War provides an illustrative case study.

I. Linkage between the Operational and Strategic Levels of War

Nations engage in war because they have aims that are not mutually attainable and whose value, at least for one party, exceeds the anticipated cost of war. Negotiated settlement has not been possible because it would involve concessions beyond those that the parties are willing to make. The purpose of war is to raise the disagreement costs of the adversary to the point where they exceed the benefit of the disputed issue to him. A rational adversary should then adjust his aims and seek a

negotiated settlement. Michael Griffith observed that "one or possibly both nations must adjust aims if the war is to be terminated. If the original aims were mutually attainable, the war would have been unnecessary."⁴ The central problem is that governments usually resort to war only after other means have failed. Because war often is a last resort, efforts to achieve policy aims before its onset concentrate on diplomacy, public opinion, and economic measures. When the decision for war is taken, much of the effort of war planning centers on employment of the military and little effort is devoted to relating these means to the ends. Often, neither civilian nor military leaders define how a war is to be terminated. War plans deal principally with the combat aspects of the initial campaign, not how this campaign will contribute to achieving war termination goals.⁵

Most modern wars are limited wars fought for limited objectives. Success in a limited war can often be achieved during negotiations in the war termination phase of the conflict. Focus on employment of the military instrument to achieve victory in the initial battles and not on relating military means to policy aims is particularly costly in limited war because the neglected war termination phase often is precisely the critical phase during which political objectives are won. Victory may be the proper objective for a military campaign but rarely for a war. Wars are disputes over policy and can be ended only with resolution of the policy clashes that caused them.⁶ Yet, as Stephen Cimbala has observed: "Americans have inherited a tradition of total victory in conflicts defined as struggles between good and evil."⁷ Concentration on total victory in the total war that the American military prepares to

fight leads to a mismatch between operational design and political objectives in the limited war in which it is likely to engage. Operational commanders must operate in both the strategic and operational levels of war to obtain clear definition of the ways in which military power can contribute to the achievement of policy goals at war termination. Such understanding is central to the formulation of effective operational design.

Definition of war termination goals is not the limit of interaction between the operational and strategic levels of war. In limited war, especially, military progress can lead to an altered vision of the end state. If policy goals change, the operational commander must re-examine the operational design, asking whether adequate military means exist to achieve the new goals and if operational design continues to support the war termination strategy.

On the operational level, military success can, of course, lead to expanded objectives that may overreach capabilities. More insidiously, even in cases where sufficient military means exist to cope with expanded operational objectives, expansion of those objectives may not best achieve war termination goals. For instance, Paul Pillar observed that: "Nations are more likely to seek negotiations when their military situation is favorable."⁸ Paradoxically, a government that has suffered military setbacks may postpone negotiations in anticipation of reversing the military outcome in the future, perhaps by transferring forces from another theater or by altering its strategy to one of attrition.⁹ The operational commander must adjust operational objectives not because of what is possible militarily but what best achieves war termination goals.

Interplay with national leaders on the strategic level is important since it is on the strategic level that war termination strategy is decided and, when necessary, adjusted.

Strategic policy may direct employment of forces for objectives unrelated either to military victory or to achieving negotiated war termination. Paul Pillar includes in these objectives "preserving and strengthening the military instrument itself [and] influencing foreign governments other than the current enemy."¹⁰ The operational commander should recognize the possibility that his strategic leadership may have aims that go beyond his theater objectives. The commander should interact on the strategic level so that he is aware of and includes these additional objectives within the operational design and efficiently employs the proper forces to attain them with minimum impact on his theater objectives.

II. Negotiations --- The Rational Model

When war termination strategy involves negotiated peace, the operational commander must develop a theory of why the enemy would negotiate in the first place, and how military force can be used to bring the opponent to the bargaining table, before an effective operational design can be formulated. Once operational art succeeds and negotiations begin, a changed theory and a new operational design are needed specifying how military force can be employed to bring the talks to a rapid and favorable conclusion.

To form a theory of what will lead the enemy to negotiate, it is necessary to assume that the opponent is rational; that his response in various situations will be based on a cost-benefit analysis founded on a value system and therefore will be

predictable. The response may be unexpected, differing from that anticipated from one's own national leadership, but it is more predictable if the enemy's value system is known.

Modern war termination theorists assault the rational model. Their arguments focus on three areas. First, the model assumes that the belligerents have sufficient information to make the necessary cost-benefit analysis.¹¹ Second, war accentuates the influence of the individual.¹² Third, a recent characteristic of world politics is the emergence of governments and movements with emotional or irrational agendas. These political actors believe that they have such an advantage of righteousness that they keep fighting despite setbacks that rationally should force them to capitulate.¹³

When evaluating the cost-benefit calculus, national leaders may have complete knowledge only of their own situation, in the best case, and rely on imperfect intelligence to estimate their opponent's position.¹⁴ This imbalance in no way implies that the cost-benefit calculus is irrational. The concept of "bounded rationality" is that a rational decision maker cannot expect complete knowledge of a given problem and therefore makes his decision within the limits of the time and information available.¹⁵ The decision maker knows his own situation; the value of the objective to him and his costs to date. He has an estimate of his opponent's capabilities and willingness to employ them. Thus he has an estimate of future costs. This is all the data required to form a rational judgement. Significantly, it is the lack of complete knowledge of one's capabilities and intentions by an opponent that permits use of the military to change the enemy's perception of the cost-benefit balance and achieve war termination goals.

War magnifies the influence of the individual but there is no reason to presuppose that this influence will be irrational. Indeed, the will of the people is the element most closely associated with passion, enmity, and irrationality.¹⁶ The political leadership harnesses and controls this passion, providing guidance. Although extreme cases of the irrational autocrat can be cited, most leaders rise to power through carefully calculated and rational actions. They recognize that accepting unreasonably high costs will endanger their power base.

Righteousness and fervor are not recent political developments. Failures in wars fought against idealistic or ideologically motivated movements stem more from inappropriate policy-strategy matches on the defeated side than from any excess of motivation or ideological purity of the victor.

In sum, it is proper to expect that an opponent's cost-benefit decisions will be rational but, also, influenced by the passion of war and the personalities of individual leaders. Operational design should attempt to inflict costs on the enemy while minimizing the effects of irrational influences so far as possible.

In the classic model of negotiated war termination, a cease-fire or armistice is arranged before statesmen begin negotiations. Thus diplomats deal with a static military situation. Once combat stops and the diplomats are bargaining, further use of the military to improve negotiated terms is difficult. The disadvantaged side can use the operational pause provided by the cease-fire to strengthen its defensive position, reconstitute forces, and redeploy. The advantaged belligerent loses momentum and is faced with the need to rekindle popular

ardor, cooled by the lull in hostilities.

Modern war termination trends are moving away from the classic model of post-armistice negotiation and toward peace negotiations that occur while hostilities continue. Nations have the technical capacity to coordinate military and diplomatic strategies.¹⁷ Statesmen now are presented with a dynamic military situation and a powerful and flexible military tool for influencing negotiations by managing the costs of disagreement and signalling future capabilities and intentions.¹⁸

III. Operational Design

In limited war, operational design must address two questions. How can the opponent be brought to the bargaining table? And, once negotiations start, how can military force be used to bring them to a rapid and favorable close?

An enemy will negotiate for two reasons: the improbability of victory, or its unacceptable cost.¹⁹ When direct military action ceases to promise attainment of the objective at acceptable costs, negotiation may offer the possibility of attaining part of it. Before negotiations begin, a belligerent is concerned with his own military potential and the cost of the objective. Operational design should focus on military victory achieved through destruction of enemy forces, reducing the opponent's military capability to a level where he is no longer able to attain his objective. Operational plans have traditionally focused on military victory. Elements of operational design for military victory are understood widely and will not be addressed further here.

The opening of a peace conference is a major change in the

state of the war.²⁰ The political objective may remain the same but the primary means of achieving it shift from military force to negotiation. The military objective changes from action to achieve the political objective through military victory to actions that exert influence on the negotiated settlement. As Staudenmaier has noted:

If the goal of the decision maker is to resolve the political issues for which war was begun, then the emphasis of military strategy should shift from its narrow preoccupation of destroying enemy forces to a consideration of how military means may be used to resolve political issues.²¹

These changed objectives demand changes in operational design.

Use of military force to improve the bargaining position requires understanding of the distinction between the cost of achieving objectives and the management of disagreement costs generally.²² When the aim is military victory, it is the cost of the objective that matters. The need to minimize cost, thus preserving resources for future action, drives operational design, which has its upper cost limit bounded by the perceived value of the objective. Costs imposed on the enemy are not a primary concern except for the case of attrition strategies and for the weakening effect that makes military objectives more readily attainable. When the object of operational design is to influence negotiations, it is the management of disagreement costs in general, one's own compared to those of the adversary, that is relevant.

The objective of cost manipulation is to make continued disagreement more costly for the enemy so that he will be more inclined to concede.²³ If the imposition of costs was itself costless, cost manipulation would be simple. However, employment of armed force requires money and material.²⁴ Cost

manipulation demands that military action be efficient. Efficiency is evaluated considering both the comparative cost to the enemy and the value of expected improvements in the negotiated settlement.²⁵

Effects on the enemy are cumulative, but costs are strictly marginal. Past (i.e., "sunk") costs cannot be erased, only future expenditures can be manipulated. Operational design must be based on anticipated future gains and costs rather than any hope of obtaining a return on past investments.²⁶

Military actions do not have to be carried out in order to influence negotiations. Their prospect alone may be enough to elicit concessions.²⁷

Value to the enemy, not military or intrinsic worth, determines selection of operational objectives. Objectives should be chosen for the clarity, shock effect, and drama that their loss or capture will have on the enemy.²⁸

Fighting while negotiating presents pitfalls for which operational design must account. The enemy may enter into negotiations to achieve policy goals that he could not gain by combat. His intention may well be to use negotiations as an extension of war: a non-violent method of sapping your domestic support while bolstering his own.²⁹ In this case one can expect morale to flag. Soldiers have difficulty understanding why they should continue to risk their lives against an enemy with whom their leaders are seeking accommodation.³⁰

Escalation may occur as negotiations draw to a close. The increased costs will have to be borne only for a short while and the enemy may use his remaining capability in a final effort to achieve the best possible settlement or to win a tactical victory for propaganda purposes.³¹ Escalation also may prove

beneficial if it can bring negotiations to a close more rapidly.

IV. The Korean War Case

The Korean War of 1950-1953 offers an example of an operational design that changed when policy objectives shifted from military victory to negotiated war termination.

A. The Korean War was a limited war. Victory may be the proper objective for a campaign but rarely for a war. Understanding of the way that military power is intended to achieve policy goals is central to formulation of effective operational design.

A limited war is not merely a small war that has not yet grown to full size. It is a war in which the objectives are specifically limited in the light of our national interest and our current capabilities . . . solutions must be sought through combined political, economic, and military efforts.³²

--- Gen. Matthew Ridgway

General MacArthur did not understand the limited nature of the Korean War. His dismissal from command stemmed as much from his failure to adapt his operational design to changed national policy for war termination as from his public disagreement with President Truman. MacArthur's success at Inchon led to a United Nations' policy calling for a unified and democratic Korea. United States' policy coincided with the United Nations' aims but avoidance of general war in Asia was an overriding United States' objective.³³ United States' involvement in Korea had to be kept strictly limited to preserve military assets for other missions, particularly the NATO commitment in Europe. MacArthur was authorized to pursue the North Korean Army only if no strong Chinese intervention was encountered. The vision of a unified Korea was based on conduct of free elections after stability had been achieved through occupation of a North Korea whose army had

been shattered. After the Chinese intervention of October 25, 1950, the Joint Chiefs informed MacArthur that his objective of destroying the North Korean Army might have to be re-examined. This suggestion led MacArthur to attack any change in the policy goal of destruction of Communist forces and uniting Korea as fatal to allied morale. He claimed that the United Nations' position would become untenable both politically and militarily if any portion of Korea was given up. On November 24th he launched an attack designed to reach the Yalu.³⁴ The National Security Council was slow to explicitly state a new war termination policy but cautions from the Joint Chiefs coupled with the weight given to avoidance of general war with China made it clear that, rather than attacking, MacArthur's priority should have been finding a defensible line and holding it.³⁵ But General MacArthur had no interest in interacting with strategic leaders to understand policy objectives, believing instead that military operations, once initiated, should determine policy.³⁶ In contrast, General Ridgway grasped the nature of Korea as a limited war and understood the war termination policy. In April 1951, the Joint Chiefs of Staff provided a study to the National Security Council that conceded: "the Korean problem cannot be resolved in a manner satisfactory to the United States by military action alone."³⁷ General Ridgway's understanding of this strategic view enabled him to develop an effective operational design leading to peace talks.

B. Changes in the military situation can lead to altered policy objectives and a different vision of the end state.

The initial political objectives in Korea were halting North Korean aggression, securing withdrawal of North Korean

forces to north of the 38th parallel, and restoration of peace and security to the region.³⁸ MacArthur's success at Inchon led to the broadened policy of uniting Korea under a single government with defensible frontiers along the Yalu and Tumen rivers. This policy was formalized in a United Nations resolution and President Truman authorized General MacArthur to continue military operations north of the 38th parallel.³⁹ When Communist China entered the conflict, avoidance of all-out war with China, which had been a political objective from the outset of the conflict, became the dominant concern, driving war termination strategy to one of negotiated peace.⁴⁰ Each of these major shifts in policy warranted changes in operational design. The United States' National Security Council was slow to state a new war termination strategy in reaction to the changed military situation resulting from the Chinese intervention of October 1950. At least partial blame for MacArthur's inappropriate attack of November 24, 1950 belongs to the National Security Council who were informed of the intended attack on November 17th, knew that it was inconsistent with the desire to avoid general war with China, but gave no firm direction to prevent the attack.⁴¹ This incident illustrates both the need for strategic leaders to react to changed military conditions and for operational commanders to interact with those leaders to identify policy changes, or to recommend them, at the earliest opportunity that military conditions warrant.

C. Operational objectives must be examined and changed appropriately when negotiations begin.

At the start of negotiations, the focus of military operations in Korea shifted from the taking of physical

objectives to management of the cost of war. General Clark summarized the United Nations' operational goals during negotiations as follows:

Since it was not our government's policy to seek a military decision, the next best thing was to make the stalemate more expensive for the Communists than for us, to hit them where it hurt, to worry them, to convince them by force that the price tag on an armistice was going up, not down, . . . Manpower was their long suit and superior technology was ours. I would not and could not afford to swap UN and Communist lives man for man. In fact I wouldn't, if I could help it, trade one American or Allied life for ten or more dead Communists.⁴²

The Joint Chiefs made a further effort to manage disagreement costs between United States and Communist forces by shifting the major burden of fighting to South Korean forces.⁴³ This initiative was intended to reduce the vulnerability of the United States to erosion of domestic support in what increasingly was perceived as a war of attrition.

D. Military actions do not have to be carried out to influence negotiations. The perceived threat of action alone may be sufficient. Military actions conveying future threats need not themselves be acts of war.

Negotiations had been in progress for eighteen months when President Eisenhower took office. He soon took three steps to convey United States' resolve and to communicate a willingness to expand the scope of the war. First, nuclear missiles were moved to Okinawa. Second, a partial alert of the Strategic Air Command was declared. Finally, the administration announced that the American Seventh Fleet, in the Taiwan Strait, would no longer shield China from a Nationalist invasion.⁴⁴ None of these actions involved direct combat, but together they clearly signalled a future threat. Whether this threat directly led to

signing of the Korean armistice is debatable. In any case, the armistice was signed on July 27, 1953.

E. In limited war, the military can succeed too well. A nation that has suffered military setbacks may postpone negotiations hoping to reverse the outcome in the future.

Military success strengthens the bargaining position of one belligerent but weakens that of its enemy. For negotiations to begin, both sides must be willing to talk. If a belligerent's bargaining position is too weak, he will not desire negotiations because the concessions anticipated will exceed those he is willing to make.⁴⁵

North Korean forces achieved battlefield victory from their invasion of the South on June 25, 1950 until the Inchon landings on September 15, 1950, occupying all the Korean peninsula except for the Pusan perimeter. Despite the loss of most of South Korean territory and the prospect that United Nations' forces would be forced off the peninsula, the United Nations Command was not willing to negotiate. The necessary concessions would have resulted in recognition of North Korean sovereignty over the whole Korean peninsula and in reward of aggression.

Similarly, after Inchon, while United Nations' forces advanced to the Yalu, Communist leaders did not seek negotiations. Concessions would have led to Republic of Korea sovereignty over the entire peninsula.

The Chinese intervention of October 1950 again reversed military prospects. The United States decided that negotiations would have to wait an improved military situation.⁴⁶ An offer to negotiate was made only when the Communist advance had been halted and United Nations' forces were advancing slowly toward the 38th parallel. Both sides were experiencing heavy losses

and it was apparent that neither could achieve all its policy goals at an acceptable cost through military action alone.⁴⁷

F. Escalation of hostilities is likely during the final stages of negotiations.

As negotiations at Panmunjon entered their final phases in April 1953, Communist forces attacked to secure front line positions that they wanted to occupy as a cease-fire line. The Communists were willing to accept heavy casualties for modest gains despite the limited scope of these attacks.⁴⁸ This offensive was a clear attempt to take territory before the fighting stopped.

On July 13, elements of five Chinese armies attacked a salient held by six Republic of Korea divisions. This attack apparently was intended to teach Republic of Korea troops a "lesson" for the future and to end the war with a propagandized "victory."⁴⁹ The Korean divisions collapsed under the weight of the attack, but United Nations' forces were able to reenforce and stabilize the line. Regaining the small amount of territory lost was not worth the probable cost to United Nations' forces. The Chinese could advance no farther without excessive losses, but the Republic of Korea had received a graphic lesson about the magnitude of force available to China, and Communist forces were able to claim a battlefield victory.

V. Conclusion

War termination strategy ideally should be articulated before a decision to employ military force is taken. Unfortunately, reality is that military forces often are committed in crises, when short notice precludes formulation of

a conflict termination strategy, or as a last resort, when planners have looked only to the initial campaign. Military success, or lack of it, can alter strategic goals. Operational design must be adaptive, ready to shift objectives as strategic aims or war termination strategies change. These guidelines offer starting points for the commander developing an operational design.⁵⁰

A. Seek definition of the war termination strategy. Develop the operational design based on this strategy.

B. Military victory is often not the proper operational objective in a limited war. The military can succeed too well. If the war termination strategy involves negotiation, severe military setbacks may make the enemy less likely to come to the bargaining table.

C. The adversary should be expected to act in a rational manner. If the goal is to influence negotiations, choose objectives that the adversary values highly. Consider his value system, not your own.

D. Taking objectives or imposing cost on an enemy involves expenditures. Remember the principles of cost management. If victory is the goal, the cost compared with the value of the objective matters. When negotiated settlement is the aim, cost comparisons both to the opponent's cost and with the value of the anticipated improvement in the negotiated settlement are relevant.

E. When there is little prospect of a negotiated settlement, military victory is the proper goal. Objectives should be chosen accordingly.

F. Guard against an enemy who intends to use negotiation as an extension of war. Communicate that delay in negotiation is

costly to him by focusing on objectives that he values highly. Expect your forces' morale to lower when negotiations start. Reenforce the idea that the operational design is intended to bring negotiations to a rapid close while minimizing casualties. Expect escalation near the end of negotiations.

Limited war with negotiated war termination, although not the focus of the twentieth century American concept of war, remains the most likely scenario for the employment of United States' forces. Careful consideration of how military means can influence negotiated settlement will remain central to the formulation of effective operational design.

ENDNOTES

1. Carl von Clausewitz, On War, Ed. and Trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret. (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1976), 87.
2. U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. Doctrine for Joint Operations. Joint Pub 3-0 (Washington, DC.: 1995), I-9 -- I-10.
3. Ibid., I-9; U.S. Army Dept. Operations. FM 100-5 (Washington, DC.: 1993), 2-6.
4. Michael C. Griffith, "War Termination: Theory, Doctrine, and Practice," Unpublished Research Paper, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS.: 1992, 8.
5. Fred C. Ikle, Every War Must End Rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 1.
6. Peter H. Vigor, Soviet Blitzkrieg Theory (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 35.
7. Stephen J. Cimbala, "The Endgame and War," in Conflict Termination and Military Strategy: Coercion, Persuasion, and War ed. Stephen J. Cimbala and Keith A. Dunn (Boulder, CO.: Westview Press, 1987), 11.
8. Paul R. Pillar, Negotiating Peace: War Termination as a Bargaining Process (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1983), 48.
9. Ibid., 49.
10. Ibid., 144.
11. von Clausewitz, 84.
12. Michael I. Handel, War Termination - A Critical Survey (Jerusalem: Alpha Press, 1978), 18.

Handel continues to say that "when leadership is concentrated in fewer hands, it becomes more important to take into account non-rational elements."
He later, on page 21, uses Bismarck and Churchill as examples of individuals who, by taking into account the long term, had a positive individual influence on rational settlements.
13. Klaus Knorr, The Power of Nations (New York: Basic Books, 1975), 111-112.

14. von Clausewitz, 84.
15. Herbert A. Simon cited by William O. Staudenmaier, "Conflict Termination in the Nuclear Era," in Cimbala and Dunn, ed., 19.
16. von Clausewitz, 89.
17. Pillar, 32.
18. Ibid., 145.
19. von Clausewitz, 91.
20. Pillar, 44.
21. William O. Staudenmaier, "Conflict Termination in the Nuclear Era," in Cimbala and Dunn, ed., 30.
22. Ibid., 179.
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24. Ibid., 146.
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28. Ibid., 192.
29. Ibid., 51.
30. Ibid., 65.
31. Ibid., 167.
32. Matthew B. Ridgway, The Korean War (Garden City, NY.: Doubleday, 1967), 245.
33. Dean Acheson, Present at the Creation (New York: Norton, 1969), 454.
34. Ibid., 465.
35. Ibid., 471.
36. J. Lawton Collins, War in Peacetime (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), 150.
37. Ibid., 303-304.

38. Ibid., 143.
 39. Ibid., 146-147.
 40. C. Turner Joy, How Communists Negotiate (New York: MacMillan, 1955), 173.
 41. Acheson, 467.
 42. Mark W. Clark, From the Danube to the Yalu (New York: Harper, 1954), 69.
 43. Collins, 304.
 44. Dwight D. Eisenhower, The White House Years: Mandate for Change 1953-1956 (Garden City, NY.: Doubleday, 1963), 123; David Rees, Korea: The Limited War (London: MacMillan, 1964), 370-371.
 45. Pillar, 53-54.
 46. Acheson, 475.
 47. Pillar, 54-55.
- Pillar includes a chart of the attitudes toward negotiation of the Korean War belligerents linked to major events in the war. He discusses the shift in attitudes resulting from each major event as well as the belligerent's perception of their bargaining position.
48. Collins, 360.
 49. Ibid., 360-361.
 50. Pillar, Appendix A.

The idea of offering a summary of guidelines is taken from Pillar, who lists pertinent concepts from his book: Negotiating Peace: War Termination as a Bargaining Process, in Appendix A to the work, entitled: Lessons for the Statesman at War. Thoughts in the Conclusion section of this paper are extracted from various sections of the paper. Sources are not separately cited here when the source was previously cited in the section of the paper from which the thought was extracted.

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